

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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SUBJ: PROPOSED ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AT BEIT JALA

REF: JERUSALEM A-31, JUNE 9, 1975 (NOTAL); TEL AVIV 3880

1. ACCORDING TO JULY 18, JERUSALEM POST A PROPOSAL FOR CREATION OF A NEW JEWISH SUBURB AT HAR GILO JUST SOUTH OF JERUSALEM WAS TO BE SUBMITTED TO GOI MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SETTLEMENT. IT REPORTEDLY WOULD CALL FOR EITHER A LUXURY SUBURB FOR 400 TO 500 FAMILIES OR A SMALL COMMUNITY OF 200 FAMILIES ORGANIZED ON A COOPERATIVE BASIS. SITE IS 800 DUNAM TRACT LOCATED ON STONY HILLSIDE ON WEST SIDE OF TOWN OF BEIT JALA, ON RIDGE OVERLOOKING JERUSALEM. CREST OF HAR GILO SITE WAS FORMER JORDANIAN ARMY CAMP PRIOR TO THE 1967 WAR. IT NOW HOUSES AN ISRAELI FIELD SCHOOL (I.E., TYPE OF DAY CAMP). (CONGEN OFFICER VISIT TO SITE ALSO REVEALED MILITARY PRESENCE AND NUMBER OF COMMUNICATIONS ANTENNA.) ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORT, FIELD SCHOOL AND AN ABSORPTION CENTER WILL BE PART OF THE SETTLEMENT. A NEW SEVEN KILOMETER ROAD BY-PASSING BEIT JALA AND BETHLEHEM TO

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THE WEST WOULD LINK PROPOSED SETTLEMENT WITH ROAD APPROACHES

TO ETZION BLOC LOCATED TO THE SOUTH.

2. ON JULY 21 CONGEN OFFICER VISITED MAYOR ARAJ OF BEIT JALA WHO ALLEGED THAT SITE OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT IS LAND THAT WAS CONFISCATED BY GOI IN DEC. 1974. ARAJ SAID THAT ACCORDING TO MILITARY, TAKEOVER OF SITE BEYOND CREST OF HAR GILO WAS FOR SECURITY REASONS. MAYOR SAID HE PROTESTED CONFISCATION AND WAS ASKED BY MILITARY AUTHORITIES TO PRESENT PROOF THAT BEIT JALA CITIZENS OWNED THE LAND. MAYOR SAID HE PRESENTED TO MILITARY GOVERNOR SEVEN MONTHS AGO DEEDS COLLECTED FROM OWNERS, BUT HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY RESPONSE. HE LAMENTED IMPOSSIBILITY OF STOPPING ISRAELIS FROM BUILDING NEW SETTLEMENT IF THEY WANTED TO DO SO.

3. HA'ARATZ (HEBREW DAILY) CORRESPONDENT YEHUDA LITANI TOLD CONGEN OFFICER JULY 21 THAT PROPOSAL STEMS FROM GOI HOUSING MINISTER AVRAHAM OFER'S DESIRE TO LINK ETZION BLOC NORTHWARD TO JERUSALEM IN MANNER THAT WOULD LEAST COMPLICATE FUTURE PEACE SETTLEMENT. HE EXPLAINED TO LITANI (SEE INTERVIEW IN FBIS TA210755Y) THAT ROAD FROM ETZION BLOC TO HAR GILO AREA AND NORTHWARD TO SOUTHWEST OUTSKIRTS OF JERUSALEM (HADASSAH HOSPITAL AREA) NEED NOT PASS THROUGH ANY ARAB VILLAGES. OFER ALLEGEDLY HOPES BY THIS PROPOSAL TO PRECLUDE EFFORT TO LINK ETZION BLOC SOUTHWARD TO KIRYAT ARBA.

4. ON GENERAL QUESTION OF NEW SETTLEMENTS ON WEST BANK, LITANI TELLS US DEFMIN PERES HAS SANCTIONED TWO SMALL NAHALS (MILITARY SETTLEMENTS), ONE SOUTHEAST OF BETHLEHEM AT TEKOA (REPORTED RECENTLY IN JERUSALEM POST) AND ANOTHER ("MORNING STAR") NORTHEAST OF RAMALLAH NEAR TAIBEH, THESE ARE IN ADDITION TO OFRA "WORK CAMP" IN FORMER JORDANIAN ARMY CAMP NEAR BAAL HATZOR, ALSO NORTHEAST OF RAMALLAH. PERES, LITANI SAYS, CONTENTS THESE ARE NOT "SETTLEMENTS" AND IT IS WITHIN HIS AUTHORITY AS DEFMIN TO ESTABLISH ESSENTIALLY MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. LITANI CLAIMS, HOWEVER, THAT GUSH EMUNIM HAS ALREADY TURNED OFRA INTO A DE FACTO SETTLEMENT AND HOPES EVENTUALLY TO DEVELOP NAHALS INTO REGULAR SETTLEMENTS ALSO.

5. COMMENT. DESPITE OFER'S REPORTED "DOVISH" MOTIVES, BEIT JALANS AND OTHER WEST BANKERS VIEW HAR GILO PROPOSAL AS SIMPLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANOTHER ENCROACHMENT ON ARAB LAND AND FURTHER EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI CONSOLIDATION OF ITS HOLD ON WEST BANK. SIMILARLY, WHILE NAHALS AND "WORK CAMP" DO NOT HAVE GOI APPROVAL AS SETTLEMENTS. EXPERIENCE INDICATES DEVELOPMENT IN THAT DIRECTION VERY DIFFICULT TO REVERSE ONCE ISRAELI PRESENCE ESTABLISHED.
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